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ABSTRACT

Graduate students have long expressed difficulties adapting to different expectations graduate schools place upon them. Foreign students pursuing knowledge in the field of speech communication encounter cultural difficulties. Foreign graduate students are students at risk because they become a central locus for cultural tensions in relation to: (1) educational systems and values; (2) sociocultural and linguistic norms appropriate for graduate programs of study; and (3) ways these students construct and reconstruct their identities. Competing and contrasting educational views from back home becomes a serious tension for graduate students at risk. Language also has a powerful impact on modalities in which these students establish themselves as competent scholars. Another cultural tension refers to assessing levels of appropriateness and significance for responses in class discussion and written form. Grading criteria is yet another. Sociocultural interpretations of interactions with faculty and peers, ability to negotiate confrontation on specific issues, and possible misinterpretation of socially acceptable behaviors represent sources of stress. Redefining or reconstructing an individual's cultural identity in another cultural context presents another challenge. To what extent does stress due to cultural tensions remain with these foreign graduate students after they have accomplished their goals of professionalism? How can they overcome perceived cultural barriers and gain confidence? By studying how the stressful journey of graduate programs affects accounts of intercultural communication, this line of research can illustrate even more significantly the necessity of intercultural communication for a global perspective of the 21st century. (Contains 27 references, and 30 notes.) (CR)

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Intercultural Challenges for Foreign Students into the Stressful Journey of Graduate School

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Graduate students have long expressed difficulties adapting to different expectations graduate schools place on them. Although not in large number foreign students pursuing knowledge in the field of speech communication encounter cultural difficulties. The expectations different programs have, individual abilities of these students to comprehend and assess their new context of study, and the research procedures are part of what such future scholars encounter in their stressful journey of graduate school.

American academia has one of the highest reputation for expertise and research in the world. Looking at world-recognized quality of scholarship, foreign students consider themselves fortunate to study in this environment, and some of them consider to pursue their professional careers becoming part of the American university workforce. So far, there is not much difference between how a "normal" American graduate student feels and his/her foreign peer in relation to higher education programs in the United States. However, foreign graduate students carry an extra cultural

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This paper recognizes the considerable levels of stress American graduate students encounter in the pursuit of a degree. However, the focus of this paper represents the intercultural

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baggage inside and outside of their graduate programs, due to which these students add considerable levels of stress to their educational journey.

Cultural difficulties and intercultural problems have long been studied by scholars in the field. An entire body of literature analyzes specific cultural issues that make communication difficult either in the classroom or in the workplace.[1] Significant studies of communication, these works examine differences in behavior and communication patterns taking foreigners, strangers, and foreign students as their main focus. For over fifteen years scholars in the field of intercultural communication had produced extensive research on behavior patterns of foreign students in a host culture. Gudykunst (1984; 1988; 1989; 1992), Gudykunst and Kim (1984; 1992), Brislin (1989), Katriel (1989; 1990), Philipsen (1990), Samovar and Porter (1987; 1992), Carbaugh (1990), Collier and Thomas (1989) and Rosaldo (1990) are well known scholars whose research emphasizes concepts of cultural identity, uncertainty reduction, intercultural communication competence, and intercultural adaptation.[2] However, there is very little written, if

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challenges for foreign graduate students in the United States. Consequently, I will point out mainly the loci of cultural tensions from the perspective of foreign graduate students, leaving out possible comparisons and contrasts with their American peers.

[2] See intercultural communication research. Studies by Gudykunst and Kim (1992), Brislin (1989), Samovar and Porter (1994), Carbaugh (1990), Philipsen (1990), to name just a few scholars, constitute significant contributions to intercultural communication field.

anything, in the intercultural body of literature on foreign graduate students and on specific cultural advantages and/or disadvantages they encounter as they participate in graduate programs.

Attracted by the level of scholarship of American universities, and willing to take any opportunity to participate in such reputable educational system, foreign graduate students begin their journey into graduate school with great expectations. Foreign graduate students need to prove themselves both professionally and culturally in order to succeed in American universities. Required to participate and contribute in conformity with American academic standards, foreign graduate students have to negotiate perceptions of differences both relating to their cultures of origin and to the culture of the graduate programs present. In the process, these foreign graduate students live with tensions that extend beyond problems of cultural adaptation to graduate programs. Thus, in addition to normal levels of stress arising from rigorous academic training, foreign graduate students find themselves pressured to perform at a disadvantage in comparison with their American peers, accruing cultural tensions along the stressful journey through graduate school.

For the purpose of this analysis, my assumptions on who constitute foreign graduate students-at-risk take into account students for whom English is their second language and whose educational background is not similar to the Anglo-American education system. I would like to make the distinction between

graduate students at risk and undergraduates as the professional careers of the former is related intrinsically to the cultural and social norms of interaction in these programs. In addition, this paper differentiates between foreign students who return to their countries of origin after completing their degrees versus the group pursuing an academic career in the American sociocultural context. This essay takes into account the latter as these foreign graduate students find themselves pressured to adjust rapidly within the "normal" temporal and cultural limits that graduate programs define for all participants.

As mentioned before, foreign graduate students raise specific cultural questions that have not been yet addressed in the field of speech communication. As these students prepare for a professional career in the American academia, they come directly into graduate programs without time to solve problems of cultural adaptation, or of cultural adjustments relating to uncertainty reduction or acculturation. Pressures due to time limitations and to high level of performance required from the very beginning put foreign graduate students in a disadvantageous position as they have to produce high quality work dealing in the same time with cultural, social and linguistic differences between American graduate programs and their previous education. How do foreign graduate students perceive and comply to deadlines so important for academic evaluation of their performances? How can these students coordinate and manage successful interactions? Can cultural, social, and linguistic barriers be overcome without enough time for cultural

adaptation processes? Thus, can foreign students be considered students-at-risk as they embody cultural tensions that confluence and interact with their performances in the programs? Do cultural differences influence and participate in increasing the students' stress during the course work of graduate programs? These are some of the questions this paper attempts to address.

This paper represents a tentative critical-cultural perspective on the challenges that foreign students encounter in graduate school. I contend that foreign graduate students are students at risk for they become a central locus for cultural tensions created by differences in educational systems, in cultural norms of socialization, and in constructions of identity. Specifically, this essay discusses how foreign graduate students become at risk[3] as they embody cultural tensions in relation to [1] education systems and values; [2] sociocultural and linguistic norms appropriate for a graduate program of study; and [3] ways these students construct and (re)construct their identities. The paper ends with a brief implications section regarding the heuristic value of viewing foreign graduate students-at-risk as a challenge for communication studies.[4]

I. TENSIONS ON EDUCATIONAL VIEWS

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[3] I consider foreign graduate students perform in a graduate program having a cultural disadvantage. Consequently, I view these students at risk, taking cultural disadvantages as risk factor pertinent for the entire analysis.

[4] I firmly believe that communication studies are enhanced by allowing different voices to be heard both within the community of communication scholars and from there onto the large culture of American academia.

Due to the exquisite quality of scientific and critical work done by American researchers, foreign students are attracted to graduate programs in order to be able to participate and contribute to such academic endeavors. In addition, American academia, as no other academic world, has welcomed more and more foreign students in different fields of research. Coming into American graduate programs with a predefined set of social and cultural expectations, foreign graduate students rapidly face cultural differences that can become significant for their career choices. Their expectations accommodate educational goals not necessarily in synchronicity with American purposes of education. The goals of all education are culturally-bound, depending on different social and cultural emphases that society places on education.[5] Gilder, describing educational goals in Romania, emphasizes that higher education in this country inherits "a practical unit for providing industrial manpower" disfavoring intellectual pursuits in favor of overt support of communist regime.[6]

How foreign students view education differs based on their cultural expectations, cultural background, and ability to understand and participate in a system that differs from the one at home. Thus, foreign students embody those educational skills culturally emphasized by [their] different education systems. When coming to the United States, foreign students need to understand

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[5] Giroux's(1992) perspective on education offers a complex interpretation of the sociocultural processes involved in education.

[6] See Gilder(1996), pp. 206-209.

and adapt to a different perspective on education and to shift their views accordingly. In other cultures, education systems can be seen in different ways, either as individual learning processes or as a means to acquire status. Caught between different educational views, foreign students need to interact in accordance with the educational priorities of American education system.[7]

While getting educated according to specific cultural, social, and scholarly requirements, American future researchers worry about job market and about national and/or state economies benefiting from their area of expertise. Europeans, on the other hand, pursue educational goals that will provide high levels of abstract knowledge, without being used to worry too much about job markets, or practical implications of their research. Different from their American counterparts, Eastern European universities have requirements on tenure and/or funding resources appropriate to their educational goals.[8] Gilder, in his study, refers to the cultural differences in education from the perspective of an American faculty who needs to adapt to Romanian students' expectations.[9]

As regards students at risk, due to cultural and social

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[7] For example, American academia values research and scholarship based on applicability grounds in relation to social demands. European universities emphasize mainly intellectual exercises with less practical value in society in general.

[8] I do not intend to contrast different systems as education. Rather, the essay points out major distinctions in educational goals that influence foreign students' expectations once in educational environments from a different culture.

[9] Gilder(1995), p. 206.

differences in educational purposes in countries of origin, students necessitate a longer time period to process new educational goals and adapt to new educational environments. Consequently, comparing and contrasting educational views from back home becomes a serious tension for graduate students at risk. These graduate students remain between past [previous/native country] and present [new/American] understanding of education, perceiving barriers of cultural and social nature in viewing their goals. Said, for example, when writing about exile, describes the immigrant's liminal existence between past and present as a marking experience reflecting cultural adaptation processes.[10] While facing culture differences and adaptation to new environments in everyday life, in the same time these students are required to perform at the level of "normality" necessary for any higher education preparation.[11]

As an exemplification, students coming from former communist countries [collectivistic societies] are trained to place their emphasis on knowledge acquisition necessary for groups rather than for separate individuals.[12] These foreign students, once they passed national competitive exams to enter higher education institutions,

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[10] Said (1991), p. 25.

[11] American students recognize that, for them, changing schools and programs constitutes a stressful process of cultural adaptation. For a foreign graduate student, this difficult adjustment process adds to ethnic, international, and linguistic barriers of understanding and performing within a culturally-different environment.

[12] See Hofstede's (1984) study on individualistic and collectivistic societies.

are/were prepared to synthesize academic information without any practical application emphasis. Asking challenging questions might "disturb" social order, consequently the higher education curricula do not encourage originality and personal opinions.[13] Thus, dependent on differences in education goals, foreign students may come into graduate programs without necessarily bridging previous expectations on education goals to current American ones. Can they participate in dialogues at high education levels if they find difficult to understand and/or perform in accordance to the cultural emphasis of American programs? These students' preparation expectations might obstruct performance levels necessary for American graduate programs. Thus, their cultural views on educational values can provide tensions for foreign students.

II. SOCIOCULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC NORMS CREATING TENSIONS

Foreign students also live within confinements of cultural tensions derived from the very graduate programs themselves. Rules of socialization in a graduate program reflect cultural ways in which graduate students perceive their participation as valid contributions to the field. Language also has a powerful impact on modalities in which foreign graduate students establish themselves as competent scholars. Thus, sociocultural norms and language barriers add to cultural tensions foreign graduate students

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[13] In Romania, practical questions relating to applicability needed to be tested for political correctness rather than for validity in the field(s). Once accepted in the higher educational system, their social status and their jobs are granted and recognized at a national level. See Casimir (1995).

perceive throughout the stressful journey of acquiring a higher education in a different country. Two such factors include: [1] cultural norms of social interactions in the program, and [2] linguistic barriers which add possible tensions for students.

Located at the intersection of cultural differences between [at least] two ways of social interactions, foreign graduate students might find themselves at risk in the graduate programs. In the beginning, independent of culture, all participants need to learn how, where, and to what degree to become involved in the particular program of choice. However, foreign graduate students become-at-risk in relation to: [a] the cultural norms of participation in the program, [b] understanding grading criteria, and [c] social interactions with peers and professors.

As regards participation in any graduate program, most **new** graduate students feel anxious and confused in the beginning. How to participate, what exactly to do, where to start, how to narrow the focus of scholarship, are several of the most common questions graduate program handbooks address in order to assist newcomers with their academic endeavors. While native graduate students adapt [faster] in another cultural environment, the process of acculturation and cultural adaptation remains a difficult task for foreign students. All these questions remain open venues of cultural tensions for students at risk.

Rules and requirements of American graduate schools remain unclear in addressing how foreign students need to bridge/read

these sociocultural norms.[14] Similar to the cultural different situation regarding educational goals, students coming from collectivistic cultures understand and perform social rules having in mind different social norms than their American colleagues.[15] In addition, the unspoken rules and norms of the organizational culture that graduate programs represent constitute another set of cultural obstacles that foreign graduate students encounter. The socialization processes addressed by specific organizational structures create more or less difficulties to misinterpret intercultural interactions. Samovar et al.(1994) offer an account on communication styles in negotiations that can be utilized in the same way in graduate programs as an example.[16] How much of the "let's do lunch" phrase can foreign students take into account? Can these students address their professor on a first name basis? How do social activities outside of the department matter for their academic endeavors? What is networking and why is it necessary? All these questions relate to cultural norms that become problematic for foreign graduate students.[17] Consequently, since participation

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[14] To my knowledge, graduate programs handbooks do not address the problem of foreign graduate students acculturation.

[15] A large number of communication scholars have researched how cultural perceptions can influence intercultural communication competence. See Hofstede (1984), Gudykunst and Kim (1992). In addition, see cultural competence perceived from the point of view of "the Other,"in Bhabba (1992), Minh-ha (1990), and/or Kristeva (1991).

[16] Samovar and Porter (1994).

[17] I make the distinction between graduate students at risk and undergraduates as the professional careers of the former relate intrinsically to the cultural and social norms of

and social interaction are culturally-bound,[18] foreign students are at risk not as much in actual interactions, rather in their ability to understand and foresee social implications for their participation.[19]

Another cultural tension for foreign students at risk refers to assessing levels of appropriateness and significance for responses in class discussion and/or in written form. When is appropriate to speak as a social interaction during seminars and/or other activities remains a tensional problem for foreign students. Ways to use humor, to create live presentations, or to elaborate on written papers in class, all contain potential cultural obstacles for appropriate behavior. Viewed as outspoken or casual in United States culture, the same students might come across as rude in interactions with Asian ones. On the basis of culturally appropriate behavior, Europeans, when presenting class material, can be perceived as condescendent and/or arrogant for their American peers. Similar to business situations in which cultural

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interactions in these programs.

[18] Gudykunst and Kim (1992); Carbaugh (1990).

[19] Again, a foreign student from a communist country, since this is the example that I have the easiest access to, based on previous experienced in the country of origin, might not understand social participation in the same ways American students do. Trained to attend mandatory meetings with no other significance but to praise the vanguard party, once in a democratic society such a student might avoid any possible implication in the program. See Casimir's (1995) collection of essays on Communication and Eastern Europe.

differences need to be negotiated,[20] cultural norms of socializing can become significant obstacles for foreign students whose careers depend on processing cultural behavior.

Another possible source of stress for foreign graduate students refers to understanding grading criteria applied to assess graduate work. Knowing that their works are evaluated like everybody else's, foreign graduate students usually work as hard as they can to overcome possible cultural and linguistic barriers. How, then, in order to overcome their different cultural background, putting in extensive hours of study, reading all the materials, and working at the best of their abilities, these students' results might not correspond to their efforts?

One answer might view foreign graduate students struggling to fully comprehend the American grading criteria for work evaluation. As stated previously, educational purposes differ in different cultures. In logical sequence, grading constitutes the corresponding act that reflects such different views. While for American scholars research papers can be written in different formats, for other cultures [Romania and Russia for example] one grammatically correct format constitutes the only option.[21] Thus,

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[20] Along with Samovar and Porter's (1994) collection of articles on business management, Bantz (1993) provides a useful example of cultural assessments in professional environments.

[21] All three American scholarship styles acceptable for research papers, MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style, do not coincide with the standardized national styles of other cultures. Most significantly, American emphasis on specific punctuation types for example are not significant elements of style for different national style formats in Eastern Europe. Consequently, the foreign students coming from that part of the world most

foreign graduate students find themselves at risk as they struggle to master assessments on what and how grading criteria work in the United States. Students at risk need to understand the grading emphasis on written papers versus oral presentations as well as to respond accordingly by focusing their work on culturally relevant matters in the program. Trained to argue orally rather than in written format, Eastern Europeans perceive themselves in the beginning of a program unable to create structured arguments required by American academic standards. Oral discussions constitute a major part of these students' grades which, in most cases in the United States, form a minor part of the seminar overall grade.

Consequently, grading criteria provides a cultural tension for foreign students in discerning how to perform according to American standards of scholarship. These students stretch their cultural knowledge to understand American principles of inquiry in order to decode culturally salient problems that would make them better researchers. As such, the cultural process of understanding and acting according to the grading procedures takes time, meanwhile these students perceive themselves at risk, struggling to adapt to be competent scholars in American academic world.

Not knowing how to define boundaries of social and cultural interactions, or how to establish ways of negotiating conflict,

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likely would not focus their working efforts on specifics such manuals provide. Their inability to fully comprehend the level at which these requirements need reinforcement in their work might induce a higher level of stress for these students.

these students can perceive themselves as the "others," the marginalized minorities.[22] Foreign graduate students can view themselves at risk due to sociocultural interpretations of interactions with faculty and peers. Understanding when and how to respond to conflictual interests, their (in)ability to negotiate confrontation on specific program issues, and/or (mis)interpreting socially acceptable behaviors represent some possible venues of stress for foreign graduate students.[23] Thus, students become at risk as they consider themselves outsiders, uninformed on acceptable cultural boundaries, constantly verifying whether they are perceived as culturally different.

For example, Israeli students are accustomed to speak in a particularly direct manner; speaking "dugri" can be a culturally acceptable behavior in seminars at Israeli universities.[24] Once removed from their initial environment, such students can be perceived as "abrasive" or "unpleasant" by their American peers or

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[22] An entire body of literature on cultural marginalization offers significant positions in regards with this cultural adaptation and perception. Appiah (1990), Bhabba (1992), Kristeva (1993), hooks (1990), Lorde (1990), McIntosh (1992), Rosaldo (1989) are some of the scholars voicing this particular aspect of cultural communication.

[23] According to American universities policies, responding to a grade assessment that seems unfair is a common procedure for American students, trained to advocate their individual perceptions of performance in class. For students from collectivistic societies, like Japan or China, it is unlikely students would dispute their grade evaluation(s) unless they had previous training on the matter. This common interactional procedure in the United States becomes a cultural barrier difficult to surmount for students (un)educated to raise such issues.

[24] Katriel (1986).

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even by faculty members unaware of this cultural norm. On the other hand, in the European academic environment(s), students are trained to converse on intellectual matters without utilizing practical exemplifications or applications as their major source of evidence. They, too, can see themselves as outsiders as they realize their interactions are perceived to be condescendent or arrogant. Asian graduate students might experience disappointment as they are willing to express their opinions only if invited several times during seminars or sessions. More so than undergraduate students, aware of possible misinterpretations of their intent and social behavior, foreign graduate students constantly negotiate how to respond, when, and in which way in order to become part of the American academia.

III. LANGUAGE AS A CULTURAL TENSION

American English constitutes the indispensable means through which all foreigners communicate and participate in American host culture. Extensive studies in intercultural communication continue to draw attention towards concepts of intercultural communication competence or overcoming linguistic barriers in classroom environment, to name a few. In order to establish themselves as scholars, foreign graduate students need abilities to master specific vocabularies and operate with conceptualizations outside of linguistic barriers. Consequently, [American-English] language becomes the main operative tool to participate along with other voices in the American academic world. However, graduate students experience linguistic tensions mainly due to: [a] (in)ability to

acquire specific vocabularies and to perform according to dissimilar rules of writing and speaking as in native culture(s); and [b] cultural obstacles of double translations, test taking procedures, and temporal frameworks necessary to process information.

Students at risk are all the time conscious of their cultural differences and of their language skills. Different ways of pronouncing English words can provoke smiles in the classrooms, making foreign graduate students aware [one more time] that English is their second language. To overcome all cultural obstacles related to language represents an impossible task. However, marking cultural tensions specific to linguistic problems might shed some light in viewing difficulties that graduate students encounter due to language barriers.[25]

Graduate students at risk work to master several levels of linguistic acquisition as they attempt to become acculturated and integrated in the program(s). Students at risk struggle with the different linguistic standards for writing or speaking skills, especially at the level of performance necessary for a competitive job market. Depending on either oral or written tradition of education in their countries of origin, these students grapple with what vocabulary to use in writing their papers versus their seminar presentations. Europeans, trained in how to participate in oral

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[25] Language barriers are common for all students. However, the distinction this paper makes is based on the focus graduate students place on language as a major cultural tool necessary for establishment in the field of communication.

seminar conversations rather than expressing themselves at their best in the American written culture, can perceive themselves unable to master language at the required level of competence.[26]

At risk in their attempt to take part through language at the same level of competence with their American colleagues, graduate students have to overcome linguistic barriers of double translations in their academic work. In any established field of research, linguistic concepts and norms of abstractions relate to specific historical, sociocultural, and political background. Although foreign graduate students comprehend [and master] abstract concepts and theories in their field(s), they cannot escape the inevitable process of double translations. To further utilize theoretical concepts, students first translate and interpret these linguistic constructs into their language of origin and secondly reinterpret them for specific English usage. This cognitive process slows students' ability to follow a fast paced speaker who utilizes cultural references significant for American audiences. The same process creates obstacles for students at risk to perform as well as their American peers in a set time examination.[27]

Foreign graduate students at risk are constantly reminded that

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[26] See Gilder's reference to students behavior in class,p. 209.

[27] For example, aware of the problems language can create for foreign students, certain national test centers differentiate the time frame necessary for examination based on whether the participants are foreign or native. CBEST examination in California constitutes such an example.

English is their second language on a daily basis. This linguistic barrier constitutes the traumatic baggage with which any foreign graduate student comes and leaves a graduate program. However, by not acknowledging or creating some validation for their efforts to make themselves understood in a different language, these students feel alienated, unable to attend the level of proficiency and/or performance necessary for a credible voice in the field of research.

IV. CULTURAL IDENTITY

A major dimension foreign students bring with them in intercultural challenges is how they (re)construct their cultural identity in another cultural context. Cultural identity[28] comes into play especially because foreign graduate students do not share common experiences and meanings with their American peers. In class, at their residence, in seminars, they remember or are reminded of their accent as they see people smile at their pronouncing difficult terms. These students find themselves asking cultural questions that place them outside of the conversations. For example, they do not know who John Madden is nor are they necessarily interested in baseball [unless they belong to a culture that had that type of sports activity]. They perceive themselves as outsiders from the beginning, relying on other people's understanding and empathy for their needs and levels of comprehension.

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[28] The research provided by Rosaldo (1989), Collier and Thomas (1988), and Carbaugh(1990) emphasizes in particular cultural identity in intercultural environments.

Due to the dynamics of any graduate program, foreign graduate students become more aware of their cultural identity as they fill gaps between cultural differences of culture, social norms, and linguistic barriers. Cultural identity, one of the social constructs that validates human existence,[29] motivates and facilitates the individual performances required in graduate schools. The "extra" identity foreign students find themselves perform within social and cultural contexts of any graduate program posits students at risk, apprehensive to fail a social and cultural identity role created for them in this environment. Carbaugh in his study on "Cultural Identity" and Collier and Thomas on the same subject provide interpretive models of definition that take into account several of the cultural norms of socialization and linguistic barriers mentioned throughout the paper.

Consequently, redefining identity does not necessarily bring a level of comfort and ability to accept the persona these students construct in order to become acculturated. Foreign graduate students become co-creators of their own cultural identities as they perceive themselves in need to play social and cultural roles in accordance with the expectations of their program. In the process, they select and deflect[30] [to borrow the Burkean terministic screen] their national identities and emphasize more of

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[29] Carbaugh (1990) defines cultural identity in relation to social norms and rituals; pp. 1-11.

[30] Burke's (1989) terministic screen of deflecting, selecting, and reflecting reality might constitute one way to interpret cultural differences in creating meaning through symbolic action, p.115.

what their perceptions of cultural expectations for their role(s) are. Once again, language barriers and cultural gaps that unable foreign graduate students to relate to American events create a hiatus in their identity formation, a stressful gap these students are unsure how to fill.

V. IMPLICATIONS

One possible benefit of a tentative critical-cultural perspective for foreign graduate students at risk lies in opening more venues for sensitive issues, by allowing more and more voices to be heard. Students at risk represent one social group that American academia are just starting to listen to. Along these lines, foreign graduate students are an even smaller minority group. Although the heuristic value of such study might seem insignificant, by bringing their perspective into the communication field, this approach can provide insight on tensions and dimensions of cultural diversity in addition to strengthening graduate programs in the United States. Thus, by accommodating and inviting foreign graduate students to partake in the academic dialogue, the members of any graduate program create new possible vistas of research, thus contributing not only to the enhancement of the program per se, but also to a broader cultural exchange for the benefit of American scholarship.

In addition to increasing cultural awareness, studying stress-related pressures that foreign graduate students encounter in preparing to become professionals in the American academia might illuminate more cultural adaptation processes researched so far.

How do these students cope with time constraints that do not allow for a lengthier period of cultural adaptation? How do cultural differences and/or social and linguistic difficulties of understanding graduate culture reflect in the performance or in their communication competence? To what extent does stress due to cultural tensions remain with these foreign graduate students even after they have accomplished their goals of professionalism? And, of course, how can these foreign graduate students overcome perceived cultural barriers and (re)gain confidence in their expertise as American specialists?

Such questions need to be addressed in the future, for the benefit of developing better understanding concepts of intercultural communication adaptation and/or competence. By studying how the stressful journey of graduate programs offers accounts of intercultural communication, this line of research can illustrate even more significantly the necessity of intercultural communication for a global perspective of the twenty-first century.

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